

MINUTES FOR JULY 7, 2011
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: Erwin Mack, Chair; Colleen Mitchell, Vice Chair; David Anspacher, MNCPPC; Ramin Assa; John Britton, Municipal League; Darrel Droblich; Richard Romer representing Councilmember Ervin; Steve Friedman; Arthur Holmes, MCDOT; Alan Migdall; Peter Moe, MSHA; Alyce Ortuzar; Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring RSC; David Sharp;

Members Absent: James D'Andrea, MCPS; Captain Thomas Didone; Jack Strausman;

County Staff: Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Will Haynes, MCDOT-DTEO; Nadji Kirby, MCDOT-SRTS; Fred Lees, MCDOT-DTEO; Tom Pogue, MCDOT; Bill Selby, MCDOT;

Guests: Mary Arzt, Sharp & Co.; Joana Conklin, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning; Shelly Johnson, Sharp & Co.; John Telesco, Rockville T&TC; Jeremy Martin, Rockville T&TC; Matthew Folder, Rockville T&TC; Daniel Seo, Rockville T&TC; Elizabeth Crane, Rockville T&TC; Peggy Dennis, Montgomery County Civic Federation; Tom Bridle, East Bethesda.

1. Committee Business

Erwin Mack, Chair, called the meeting order at 7:03 pm.

MOTION: A motion was made by a committee member and seconded to accept the minutes as presented. The May Minutes were approved unanimously, without further discussion.

Reappointments and New Member Selection Committee: Still awaiting the package of applicants from the County Executive's Office. All members who wish to reapply should have submitted their applications. Erwin Mack's request to be re-appointed to a third term was approved by the County Executive and has been submitted to the Council for approval. The selection committee is comprised of Jeff Dunckel, Steve Friedman, and Colleen Mitchell. Others who wish to interview candidates were invited to volunteer. Mitchell has served as Vice-Chair the last two years. If she would like to continue to serve, or if anyone else would like to nominate someone to serve, let Dunckel know.

Council Approved Budget – FY 12 (Bill Selby): The sheet of the last three years of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative Budget was distributed; there are also other MCDOT expenditures that address pedestrian safety improvements. No major cuts in pedestrian safety this year. Transit fares were maintained while parking rates were increased to discourage driving into the CBDs – rather walk, bike, or take transit to the urban districts. Kids will ride free once again. Positions in road maintenance were eliminated. Selby stated the bottom line for pedestrian safety is we are maintaining current funding levels despite the County's very difficult fiscal situation. Free parking at libraries has been cut at some locations. Alyce Ortuzar objected to charging for parking at libraries if the libraries are not well served by transit. Ortuzar also raised concerns with the walk signals at the newly installed traffic signals in Olney that do not go on automatically for pedestrians to cross.

Pedestrian Collision Statistics to Date (Cpt. Tom Didone): Dunckel handed out the latest update to the Pedestrian Collision Table that Didone had provided. The numbers have been updated through May, 2011. The first quarter looks good: pedestrian collisions and fatalities were down significantly. The April and May numbers indicate this trend continues. The current trend is positive, though it is too early to tell for sure. The severity of collisions also has continued to decline to 24% of pedestrian collisions involving incapacitating injuries or fatalities, down from previous yearly percentages above 30%. Bicycles are not included in these statistics; Didone is having those compiled separately. Tom Pogue suggested the table should note the absence of bicycle collisions as a footnote since this is consistently a point of confusion when the pedestrian collision numbers are released.

Visitor Comments: Peggy Dennis cited her efforts to raise support and awareness of bicycle safety, holding the first ever Montgomery County Bicycle Conference in May. She is advocating for more people to use bicycles for short trips and to Metro and transit stops. Steve Friedman complemented Dennis on her good work and efforts on behalf of bicycling. John Britton announced that Rockville had just received a grant for a bike share program, and that more information would be

forthcoming. Mack described what he had observed in Europe, where bicycles are used much more.

2. Targeted Education and Enforcement in the High Incidence Areas (HIAs)

Jeff Dunckel introduced the new team hired to survey pedestrians on both perceptions and knowledge of pedestrian safety and to implement the pedestrian safety education programs in the HIAs. Based on the surveys and other information or data, education plans are being developed for each of the HIAs. The first two efforts will wrap up education activities on the first HIA, Piney Branch, which began almost two years ago, and to kick-off activities at the next HIA, Four Corners. Joana Conklin, a subcontractor of Sharp and Company, was introduced as the person hired to implement education activities, and Mary Arzt as one of the principles at Sharp and Company who is directing the creative ideas for outreach and education activities.

Arzt provided a brief presentation on the program as it is developing. A targeted approach is being developed for each HIA. Existing resources will be leveraged, using the street and other programs like Street Smart-- reaching people at the street level with a curb campaign. Arzt described the proposal to use curb markings on Piney Branch, and the continuation of the pedestrian intercept program using CASA, a local community organization, to field bi-lingual teams. Media coverage will be sought. Four Corners will involve some other event - - potentially employing a “flash mob”—street theater that appears spontaneous and serves to draw the attention of observers to a particular theme or message-- with a “Hey, I’m looking at you,” theme to encourage the establishment of eye contact between the drivers and pedestrians.

Comments from the committee included:

- Need to measure effectiveness of the campaign – obtain video data
- Pre-test and Post-test people with the message, using focus groups
- Anything that comes of this work on Piney Branch should go into the Sector Plan revisions
- What about getting survey data on the motorists? Use zip codes of license plates of crash vehicles
- Need the demographic information of both the perpetrators and the victims of crashes
- Use focus groups, even informal, to help develop the message
- Be sure we are asking kids what is a good messaging method – they know what’s “cool,” we don’t
- Teenagers may be less concerned with being embarrassed or made to look stupid – they challenge
- Use group “Noise” for free focus groups – check with Darrell Droblich
- Focus groups can also help define good distribution technique
- Foot traffic on Piney Branch on weekend nights reported to be heavy
- Observational data needs to be coupled with the perception data to be valuable
- Don’t let message challenge teens to bad behaviors: “NO WAY,” “Oh yeah? I’ll show you!”
- Never give a message to a young person, without having a young person involved in setting message
- Involve Blair High students in developing message - - and not just the Advanced Placement kids
- Get school administration involved to reinforce messaging – help enforce safe behavior
- Blair High School Newspaper is a good venue to get information out
- Directions to the safe crossing on the sidewalks

Future presentations will include Will Haynes describing his work with the Pedestrian Road Safety Audits and the results of that work. This is the precursor to the work done under education and enforcement.

3. Traffic Lights and Pedestrian Signals

John Britton announced that Speed Lumps have now been installed in Rockville on Lynch, between Beale and Manatee. He proceeded to introduce the Rockville Traffic and Transportation Commission (TTC) which advises the City Council and Mayor on transportation issues, including pedestrian and bicycle safety: John Telesco (Chair,) Elizabeth Crane, Jeremy Martin, Matt Folden, and Daniel Seo. A subcommittee was established last year to study pedestrian safety issues and to bring their recommendations before the Council. A memo from the TTC on specific pedestrian problems was presented to the City Council last month. A special session has been set up in two weeks to discuss this with a work group. They are here tonight to discuss with the PTSAC the issues they are working on. Martin presented the following comments.

The subcommittee was formed in response to several pedestrian fatalities on Rockville Pike last year: two at White Flint and one near Edmonston. While safety improvements were made soon after these fatalities occurred, the TTC wanted to see what could be done to make pedestrians safer before such tragedies occur. The TTC decided to focus on the issue of pedestrian crossings on Rockville Pike. There was concern that pedestrians often don't push the ped-signal buttons to activate the crossing signals, then cross without the ped-signal being activated. The group focused on Kings Farm and MD 355 (Frederick Road). Elizabeth Crane pointed out that when the ped signal is not activated, pedestrians have no idea how much time they have to cross. Sometimes the push button activates a longer ped-crossing signal but sometimes it does not. Crane suggested that at locations that pushing the button does not give more time to cross, then why not just have the pedestrian signal automatically function?

Rockville has recently formed a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee to address needed improvements to safety in the City of Rockville. As the County and the region move towards transit-oriented communities, the issue of safe pedestrian pathways is becoming essential. More priority needs to be given to safe pedestrian signals and crossings. Jeremy Martin stated that the TTC would like to work with the PTSAC to help address these issues.

Matt Folden followed up with a summary: City staff inventoried all pedestrian facilities in Rockville, regardless of who maintained them – Rockville wants to share that with the County and the State to make improvements in the City. Alan Migdall offered to work with the City and their inventory and help improve pedestrian safety features.

Art Holmes pointed out the complications of having multiple jurisdictions; their needs to be a way for the jurisdictions to work together and cooperate. Just because it is someone else's jurisdictions, if it is wrong, it should not stay wrong but should be corrected. Holmes stated that if we go into these issues in a cooperative spirit, then changes can be made. If there are problems, they should be elevated to the right folks. Holmes requested that if something is not right in MCDOT, then it should be elevated to him.

Colleen Mitchell asked about Rockville's policy on "No Turn on Red;" It is a case-by-case basis according to Folden and Daniel Seo. Hot rights are being changed to improve pedestrian safety.

Alan Migdall suggested that some type of feedback mechanism needs to be incorporated into pedestrian-activated signals, like a light that comes on when the button is pushed.

ACTION: Everyone agreed that the City of Rockville would submit their ideas and issues for improving pedestrian safety and the crossing signals on Rockville Pike to Fred Lees for the MCDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Division to address. Holmes emphasized the need to address these issues at the staff level first, and then elevate them if the issues cannot be resolved; the PTSAC is not going to be able to solve all the problems – staff needs to address these issues.

Peter Moe stated that this inter-jurisdictional cooperation and effort needs to be replicated with other local jurisdictions. Moe needs feedback also on what is not being addressed at the State level. We need to monitor for issues of common concern, so that issues and solutions that arise in Rockville can then be addressed elsewhere.

4. Subcommittee Reports, Updates, and Recommendations

Sidewalks-Pedestrian Network Assessment: Ramin Assa summarized last month's activities: candidate neighborhoods to conduct a targeted assessment of pedestrian facilities are being identified in Silver Spring and Bethesda. Several locations will be proposed as candidates. These will be put into the Subcommittee Report/Recommendations. Dunckel will be sure Assa has a copy of the form to complete; Ramin will distribute this completed form to the PTSAC two weeks before the next meeting.

Peter Moe explained the State's process of developing a "Strategic Highway Safety Plan – Pedestrian Emphasis Area". Problem identification is one of the first items in the plan, looking at what assets should be examined to improve safety. This may provide some useful ideas to doing an inventory of the assets.

Bicycle Access and Safety: Steve Friedman pointed out the number of commuters using bikes seem to be on the rise; Bike-to-Work Day had more than 11,000 participants this year. This does result in more conflict, which seems to be taking place on the

roads now. Last month, Friedman attended the McArthur Boulevard Bicycle Forum which brought some of these issues to the fore. Friedman wants to confer with Tom Didone before discussing the event with the PTSAC. There does appear to be some confusion and some ignorance about laws applicable to all road users as they pertain to bikes. Friedman suggested changing “Share the Road” bicycle signs, to “Bicycles May Use Full Lane” to emphasize what is the law. Friedman asked that SHA come to the next PTSAC meeting to discuss these issues, as there appears to be some momentum in the agency for changes.

The Ride-along activity is now being planned for early fall. Logistics are going to take more time.

5. Follow-up on WMCCAB Letter

Erwin Mack presented the response letter prepared by Art Holmes for following up on the issues and concerns raised by the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board. Holmes will raise the issue at the County Executive’s Directors’ Meeting as well.

6. New Business/Committee Comments:

Recording of Voting and Reporting (Mack): Erwin Mack clarified the policy of not identifying who votes how on committee motions. This was an issue that emerged following the vote concerning Council Bill 12-11, Roadside Solicitation. David Anspacher suggested that more advanced notice on these controversial issues, with more time to confer on his agency’s response would be helpful. Rich Romer pointed out the committee is advisory to both the Council and the Executive, and that sometimes places it in a difficult position politically. The value of the committee is to advise more than voting on motions taking a position one way or the other on an issue.

Peds and Bikes in the Baltics (Mack): Erwin Mack described the extensive use of Roundabouts in England, and how effective they are.

Green Features in Traffic Calming and Sidewalks (Ortuzar): This issue will be on the September agenda.

Next scheduled meeting date had been September 1, 2011.

MOTION: Motion was made and seconded to reschedule the next PTSAC meeting to September 8, 2011, due to the conflict with the Labor Day Holiday. The motion passed unanimously.

Colleen Mitchell raised an issue to Peter Moe concerning new speed cameras installed on Georgia Avenue, north of Spring Street. She said they have no markings or signs alerting drivers to the cameras.

7. Adjourn: the meeting adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Revised by TDP, 7/26/2011 10:43 AM & Erwin Mack, 7/25/2011 H:\CommOutreach\Pedestrian Safety\PTSAC\Agendas-Minutes\Meeting Minutes\2011\July\Minutes for PTSAC 7-7-11-Draft3_For Member review.doc